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KNUCKLES™ THE ECHIDNA

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DIRECT EDITION

KNUCKLES™

BOOK TWENTY-FOUR

DARK ALLIANCE

PART THREE OF THREE

Born to the most noble of Echidna houses, the latest to continue the family heritage and responsibility as Guardian of The Floating Island, defender of all the forces of evil from the world beyond as well as those who would threaten from within!

Archie Comics and SEGA present... KNUCKLES THE ECHIDNA!

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"It is my conviction that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself -- nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert defeat into victory. In every dark hour of our society, a leadership of frankness and vigor has met with that understanding and support of the people themselves which is essential in achieving the desired goal. I am convinced that you will again give that support to leadership in these critical days."

Spectre, on the eve of rallying the citizenry against the Dark Legion during their takeover of Echidnapolis

I THOUGHT I'D FIND YOU *HERE*!

NOT *NOW*, SPECTRE!

ARCHIMEDES AND I ARE OFF TO ECHIDNAPOLIS TO HELP OUT *KNUCKLES*!

IT'S *IMPORTANT* THAT YOU RETURN WITH ME TO *HAVEN*!

EXCUSE ME--

--BUT *WHAT* COULD BE *MORE* IMPORTANT THAN MY *SON*?

HAVEN HAS BEEN *INVADED* BY THE *DARK LEGION*, LOCKE!

I DON'T BELIEVE I NEED TO DRAW YOU A MAP TO UNDERSCORE THE *IMPLICATIONS* OF WHAT THAT MEANS!

SHOULD OUR INNERMOST SECRETS BE *PENETRATED*--!

KNUCKLES IS NOW BEING HELD *CAPTIVE* BY OUR MOST *DANGEROUS ENEMY*!

HOW CAN I *ABANDON* HIM WHEN HE *NEEDS* ME THE MOST?

HE'LL STAND EVEN *LESS* OF A CHANCE SHOULD DIMITRI UNCOVER THAT WHICH WE'VE *HIDDEN* FOR SO LONG, LOCKE!

SHOULD YOU GO TO HIS SIDE AND HAVEN FALLS--

--I WOULDN'T LAY ODDS ON ANYONE'S CHANCES FOR SURVIVAL!

BAM!

WE'RE IN THE LOWER LEVELS!

BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE I'VE BEEN DOWN HERE!

THIS IS ALSO THE ONLY AREA THROUGH WHICH WE CAN GAIN ACCESS WITH THE ELEMENT OF SURPRISE ON OUR SIDE!

YOU BETTER BE RIGHT ABOUT ALL THIS, SPECTRE--

PRIMARY EVIL

"--OR I'LL HOLD YOU *RESPONSIBLE* IF ANYTHING HAPPENS TO *KNUCKLES*!"

WELL, WELL, WELL, *LOOK* WHAT THE CAT *DRAGGED* IN!

I SEND *XENIN* TO GET OUT THE *PARTY MESSAGE*, AND INSTEAD, HE ROUNDS UP THE *DOWN-TRODDEN* AND OTHER *UNDESIRABLES*!

THE *HEAD GOOMBA*--"*SON* OF *KRAGOK*?"

AND *WHO* ARE *YOU*?

DON'T PUSH YOUR LUCK, GUARDIAN!

THE *HONORED DIMITRI* IS NOT ONE TO BE ADDRESSED IN SUCH A *DISRESPECTFUL* TONE!

DIMITRI?! HERE?!! ALIVE?!!!

I *ALWAYS* KNEW YOU ECHIDNAS WERE *NOT* TO BE *TRUSTED!*

YOU'D EVEN TURN ON ONE OF YOUR *OWN* KIND!

AH, BUT THAT'S WHERE YOU'RE *MISTAKEN*, MY DINGO *FRIEND*!

I'VE *NEVER* BEEN ONE TO *TURN* ON MY OWN KIND!

HAH!

I SEE WE HAVE A *DISSENTER*!

YOU GOT THAT RIGHT!

IF YOU *ARE* DIMITRI -- AND IF I HAVE MY STORY *STRAIGHT*--

--YOU WERE ON TRACK TO *ENSLAVE* YOUR OWN PEOPLE UNTIL YOUR OWN *BROTHER* PUT THE BAG ON THAT PLAN!

MY LATE BROTHER, *EDMUND*, WAS A *DUPE* OF THE *STATE*!

SAY, *WHAT*?

THE *CREATIONISTS* RUNNING THE *HIGH COUNCIL* AT THE TIME STILL HADN'T FORGIVEN THE *TECHNOCRACY* FOR SAVING THE FLOATING ISLAND FROM THE WHITE COMET--

--AND SINCE THEY WERE *AFRAID* THAT MY EFFORTS TO *RESTORE* THE ISLAND TO ITS *ORIGINAL SITE* WOULD UPSET THE BALANCE OF POWER IN *FAVOR* OF THE TECHNOCRACY--

--THEY *USED* MY BROTHER AS THEIR *TOOL* TO *SUPPRESS* THE TECHNOCRACY!

THAT'S WHAT THIS IS ALL ABOUT--

-- *RESTORING* OUR SOCIETY TO THE WAY THINGS *USED* TO BE!

YOU MEAN WE USED TO BE A BUNCH OF *THUGS* WHO *BEAT* THE *WEAK* AND *HELPLESS*?

"THAT'S THE *PROBLEM* WITH THE *YOUTH* OF TODAY--NO SENSE OF *HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE*!"

WE'D LIKE TO KNOW WHAT *YOUR* DEPARTMENT INTENDS TO DO ABOUT THE *CURRENT SITUATION*!

WHAT CURRENT SITUATION?

ARE YOU SAYING *ECHIDNAPOLIS* IS ANYTHING BUT THE *EPITOME* OF *PEACE* AND *HARMONY* OUR PEOPLE *BELIEVE* IT TO BE?

TOUCHE'!

ALL RIGHT, THEN, ALLOW ME TO LAY *MY* CARDS ON THE TABLE!

--HAVING DECLARED HE IS NO LONGER RUNNING FOR OFFICE, *HIGH COUNCILOR PRAVDA* HAS ESSENTIALLY REDUCED HIMSELF TO THE STATUS OF *NON-ENTITY*!

AS FOR YOU, CONSTABLE--

--YOU ARE AN *APPOINTED* OFFICIAL TO A *NON-POLITICAL* POSITION!

THE WAY I SEE IT--

BASED ON HIS *REACTION*, IT WOULD SEEM MY FRIEND *CONCURS*!

THAT MEANS YOU CAN BE *REPLACED*!

I, ON THE OTHER HAND, IN ONLY A FEW SHORT HOURS, WILL *HAVE* THE *POWER* TO MAKE YOURS A *LIFETIME APPOINT-MENT*--

--ANSWERABLE TO *NONE*, SAVE *ME*--

--AND ALL YOU NEED TO *DO* IS SWEAR *UNDYING LOYALTY* TO ME!

ISN'T THAT COUNTING YOUR EAGLETS *BEFORE* THEY'RE HATCHED?

WHO'S TO SAY *YOU'LL* BE DECLARED THE *WINNER*?

NOT WHO, BUT RATHER *WHAT*!

THANKS TO THE *FIBRE-OPTIC DATA TRANSMISSION NETWORK* INSTALLED IN EACH AND EVERY HOME--

--NOT ONLY DOES AN ELECTION CYCLE OCCUR IN MERE *DAYS* AS OPPOSED TO THE *WEEKS* AND *MONTHS*-LONG PROCESS IN THE PAST--

--BUT WE CAN *TAP INTO* IT, AFFECTING THE *FINAL OUTCOME*!

VOTE EARLY, VOTE *OFTEN*, EH?

SUPPOSE I DECIDE *NOT* TO GO ALONG WITH THE PLAN?

I VERY MUCH *DOUBT* THAT!

LIKE *EVERYONE* ELSE, CONSTABLE, YOU HAVE YOUR *SECRETS*--

--SOMETHING IN YOUR *PAST*-- SOMETHING YOU THOUGHT WOULD ALWAYS STAY *HIDDEN*--SOMETHING YOU'D RATHER OTHERS *NEVER FIND OUT*!

HOW MUCH IS IT *WORTH* TO YOU FOR IT TO *REMAIN A SECRET*?

"NOW THAT WE *UNDERSTAND* EACH OTHER, HERE IS WHAT YOU *WILL DO*..."

YOU KNOW WHAT YOUR *PROBLEM* IS, KNUCKLES?

YOU'VE BEEN SO *CONDITIONED* TO THINKING ONLY A *CERTAIN* WAY, THAT IT'S DIFFICULT FOR YOU TO SEE THE *OTHER SIDE* OF THE COIN!

THAT TYPE OF THINKING CAN BE *DANGEROUS*--

--SO WE EITHER *DEAL* WITH IT OR *ELIMINATE* IT!

LAST TIME I REMEMBER, YOU WEREN'T TOO KEEN ON MY *GOOD HEALTH*!*

NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT--

--I'VE HAD MORE THAN *AMPLE* TIME TO REFLECT UPON THOSE EARLY MEETINGS--

--AND AS I *ENDURED* THOSE LONG MONTHS OF *RECONSTRUCTION* BEFORE OLD AGE ALMOST TOOK ME, I REALIZED THERE HAD TO BE SOMETHING *SPECIAL*-- ABOUT YOU IN ORDER FOR YOU TO *PREVAIL* AGAINST MY *LIMITLESS* POWER!

* AS SHOWN IN DARK VENGEANCE STORYLINE IN KNUCKLES #7 THROUGH 9--J.F.G.

BY *LEARNING* WHAT MAKES YOU *TICK*--

"--PERHAPS A MEANS CAN BE FOUND TO *RESTORE* WHAT WAS ONCE *MINE*!"

NO?

BECAUSE *ALL* THEY DO IS *HANG* AROUND!

HAHAHAHA

THAT'S A REAL *LAUGH-GETTER*, ALL RIGHT!

YOU *NORMALLY* THIS *FUNNY*, XENIN, OR WHAT?

IF YOU DIDN'T *APPRECIATE* MY SENSE OF *HUMOR* JUST THEN, HOW ABOUT *NOW*?

I HAVE THIS *FULLY-CHARGED* BLASTER ON *MAXIMUM SETTING*, AND I'M SEARCHING FOR A SUITABLE SUBJECT TO *TEST* IT OUT ON!

CARE TO BE MY *VOLUNTEER*, JULIE-SU?

DID YOU HEAR WHY *DINGOES* ARE GENERALLY CONSIDERED THE *LAZIEST*, MOST *SHIFTLESS* FURBALLS AROUND?

SO THIS IS HAVEN, EH?

SEEMS A LOT LIKE OUR LAST SET-UP!*

*AS SEEN IN KNUCKLES: THE DARK LEGION #1 THROUGH 3--JUSTIN.

I THOUGHT THESE GUYS WERE SUPPOSED TO BE AGAINST US!

INSTEAD, THEY COME ACROSS MORE LIKE US!

DON'T LET ANY OF THIS FOOL YOU!

IF PAST HISTORY IS ANY INDICATION--

--THERE'S NO LOVE LOST BETWEEN EITHER SIDE--ugh!

YOU GOT THAT RIGHT!

OOF!

WUUUMPH!

WHAAAM

HOW VULGAR OF YOU, LOCKE!

WHY RESORT TO FISTS WHEN YOU POSSESS THE POWER OF THE EMERALD?

BECAUSE IT FELT MORE HONEST USING MY FISTS TO DO THE DIRTY WORK!

C'MON!

« THE BATTLE'S ONLY JUST GETTING STARTED ! »

WELL, CONSTABLE-- WHAT'S IT GOING TO BE?

IRREGARDLESS OF WHAT YOU BELIEVE YOU MAY HAVE ON ME, BENEDICT--

--I SIMPLY CAN'T GO ALONG WITH YOU !

MAYBE IT'S EASY FOR YOU TO SELL OUT, BUT I'M NOT WILLING TO PAY THAT PRICE !

WHAAAT?!

DO YOU REALIZE THE CONSEQUENCES OF YOUR DECISION, REMINGTON ??

YES ! I DO !

AND THAT'S "CONSTABLE" REMINGTON TO YOU !

TAKE IT UP WITH HIGH COUNCILOR PRAVDA !

HE'S OUTLIVED HIS USEFULNESS, ANYWAY !

SLAAAM!

NOW, IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME--

--I HAVE AN ELECTION TO CLAIM VICTORY OF !

MY APOLOGIES, HIGH COUNCILOR--

--BUT I CAN'T ALLOW YOUR "FRIEND" TO ESCAPE!

YOU, THERE! SEND FOR THE *MEDICS*!

HIGH COUNCILOR PRAVDA IS IN HIS OFFICE AND IN NEED OF *SERIOUS* ATTENTION!

NOW TO *HOPE* BENEDICT HASN'T GOTTEN TOO MUCH OF A JUMP IN FRONT OF ME!

SO MUCH FOR THAT THOUGHT!

HOLD ON HERE!

I MAY HAVE MY *TICKET TO RIDE*, AS WELL!

HARRY!

CONSTABLE! WHADDYA WANT? I'VE BEEN KEEPING MY NOSE *CLEAN*!

THAT'S *DEBATABLE*! HOWEVER, YOU'RE JUST THE ONE FOR THE JOB I HAVE IN MIND!

NAMELY--

--FOLLOW THAT CAR!

TAXI

"DON'T YOU EVER REQUEST ANYTHING THAT *ISN'T* DETRIMENTAL TO SOMEONE'S HEALTH?"

TAKE A *LOOK*, SIR!

THE READINGS I'M GETTING FROM THE *MAGNETIC IMAGING RESONATOR* ARE TOTALLY OFF THE DIAL!

CAN YOU DETERMINE WHETHER THE CAUSE FOR THIS *ANOMALY* IS *NATURAL* OR *ARTIFICIAL* IN ORIGIN?

SIR, THE RESONATOR DOESN'T SHOW A TRACE OF ANY ARTIFICIAL IMPLANTS, ENHANCEMENTS OR DEVICES OF ANY KIND!

NOT EVEN ON A *SUB-ATOMIC* LEVEL!

IF *KNUCKLES* IS INDEED THE *NATURAL SOURCE* OF SUCH ENERGY, THESE READINGS INDICATE HE'S CAPABLE OF *GENERATING* POWER AKIN TO A *CHAOS EMERALD*.

CAN IT BE *POSSIBLE*-?

AFTER ALL, I GAINED *MY* POWER THROUGH THE MEANS OF A *CHAOS SYPHON*!

BUT WHAT *IF* SOMEONE ACTUALLY *DARED* TO BIOENGINEER THE *ULTIMATE* ECHIDNA--

--TO WHAT *LIMIT* WOULD THAT INDIVIDUAL'S ABILITIES *EXTEND*?

AND IF WHAT I'M *THINKING* IS CORRECT, THAT WOULD *EXPLAIN* A GREAT MANY THINGS.

SIR!! THE ALARM!!!

BRAAK! BRAAK! BRAAK!

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TECHNICIAN! WHAT'S THE *PROBLEM*?

SIR, THE *RESONATOR* IS *OVERLOADING*!

I'M TRYING TO SHUT *ALL SYSTEMS DOWN*, BUT NOTHING'S WORKING!

"EVEN THE *CIRCUIT BREAKERS* ARE *BLOWING*!

"IT'S AS IF WE WERE *PLUGGED* INTO A LIMITLESS POWER SOURCE AND COULDN'T *DISCONNECT*!"

CAN WE *CONTAIN* THE POWER SURGES? *LIMIT* THEM ONLY TO THE *IMMEDIATE VICINITY*?

HIGHLY *DOUBTFUL*, SIR!

SYSTEM AFTER SYSTEM IS *COLLAPSING*!

OUR *ENTIRE* NETWORK IS NOW IN *JEOPARDY*!

WHAT ABOUT *KNUCKLES*?

CAN WE *EXTRACT* HIM *SAFELY* OUT OF THE CHAMBER?

UNKNOWN, SIR!

AT THE PRESENT RATE OF RADIATION DISCHARGE, THE *ENVIRONMENT* INSIDE THE CHAMBER WILL BE *UNINHABITABLE* IN LESS THAN FIFTEEN MINUTES!

ARE THERE *ANY* OTHER *OPTIONS* STILL OPEN, TECHNICIAN?

YOU CAN *EITHER* GIVE THE ORDER TO *EVACUATE*, SIR--

"--OR YOU CAN ATTEMPT TO *DESTROY* THE SOURCE OF OUR PROBLEM NOW LYING *INSIDE* THE CHAMBER!"

HELLO! END OF THE LINE!

HARRY!! WHAT ARE YOU *DOING*?!!

KEEP GOING!!!

ARE YOU *NUTS*, CONSTABLE?!

DID YOU *SEE* WHERE *BENEDICT* CHECKED INTO?

THAT'S THE *TECHNOLOGY NOW CAMPAIGN HEAD-QUARTERS!*

WORD ON THE STREET IS YOU *DON'T* WANNA *MESS* WITH THESE GUYS!

EASY, HARRY!

WE AREN'T GOING TO ATTEMPT A *FRONTAL* ASSAULT!

MAKE A *RIGHT* AND LET'S SEE IF WE CAN'T FIND A WAY *IN* THROUGH THE *BACK*!

I GOT A *BAAAD* FEELING ABOUT THIS, CONSTABLE!

WOULDN'T THE *SMART* THING TO DO *FIRST* IS CALL YOUR TROOPS IN FOR *BACK-UP*?

READ

SPAZ RULZ

"NORMALLY, IT WOULD BE HARRY, BUT RIGHT NOW, I'M NOT SURE WHO TO TRUST!"

COME IN, KOMMISAR!

DIMITRI IS MOST ANXIOUS TO HEAR YOUR REPORT!

MORITORI REX AND I HAVE BEEN THROUGH THIS PLACE MOST THOROUGHLY--

--AND THE CONSENSUS IS IT WOULD SUIT OUR NEEDS PERFECTLY!

WHAT ABOUT THE GUARDIANS?

ARE THEY ALL ACCOUNTED FOR?

ALL BUT TWO!

IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME, HOWEVER--

BLIIP!

WHA--?!!

GRAND-FATHER!! WE'VE LOST CONTACT WITH CENTRAL COMMAND!!

I'LL WAGER IT'S OUR LONG LOST BIRDIES COME HOME TO ROOST!

BE ON GUARD FOR ANYTHING!

ESPECIALLY SPECTRE!

THE LIGHTS!! BUT HOW?

OUR TROOPS ARE EVERYWHERE THROUGHOUT!

RELAX, KOMMISAR! I KNOW ALL OF THEIR SECRETS--

--AND I KNOW HOW TO USE THIS LABYRINTH TO OUR ADVANTAGE!

FOLLOW ME!

MY SPECIAL LENSES ALLOW ME TO COMPENSATE AGAINST THE DARK, ENABLING ME TO SEE AS IF IT WERE DAYLIGHT!

MY EYES!

I CAN'T SEE!!!

I'VE WAITED A LONG TIME FOR THIS, TREACHEROUS ONE!

THERE'S MUCH YOU'RE GOING TO ANSWER FOR!

SPECTRE!

HERE TO EXTRACT YOUR REVENGE, NO DOUBT!

AMONG OTHER THINGS!

I HATE TO DISAPPOINT YOU, LOCKE, BUT IT'LL BE A COLD DAY IN A HOT PLACE BEFORE YOU-- SEE--ME--

--BEG-- uhh--

EVERYONE ELSE SHOULD BE SLEEPING LIKE A BABY, THANKS TO THE GAS CANNISTERS WE HOOKED UP TO THE VENTILATION SYSTEM!

BEFORE WE GET CARRIED AWAY PATTING OURSELVES ON THE BACK--

"--THERE'S STILL A LOT OF WORK LEFT TO DO!"

GIVE THE WORD, SIR, BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE!

NO!

KNUCKLES IS MUCH MORE VALUABLE TO ME ALIVE!

BUT, SIR--!

DO IT!

ALL HANDS ABANDON STATIONS!!!! I REPEAT-- ALL HANDS ABANDON STATIONS!!! THIS IS NOT A DRILL!! THIS IS NOT A DRILL!!!

WAIT!

YOU CAN'T JUST LEAVE US HERE HANGING LIKE THIS!!

IT'S BEEN FUN, PEOPLE, BUT NOW I HAVE TO CLEAR THE AREA!

WHY NOT--

--ALL I SEE ARE ENEMIES AND TRAITORS DESERVING WHATEVER HAPPENS TO THEM!

YOU HEARD THE COMMAND!! EVERYONE CLEAR OUT NOW!!

BUT WHAT ABOUT DIMITRI?!

"DIMITRI LEFT ORDERS THAT HE WASN'T TO BE DISTURBED NO MATTER WHAT, AND UNLESS YOU FEEL LIKE SACRIFICING YOUR LIFE BEFORE IT'S TIME, I SUGGEST YOU DO THE SMART THING!

HOLD ON HERE! WHERE'S EVERYONE RUNNING OFF TO?

EXPLOSIONS!!! COMING FROM WITHIN!!

WHAT COULD POSSIBLY BE THE CAUSE?!

MY SENSORS INDICATE A SURGE OF POWER ON A BUILD-UP!

AT THIS RATE, THERE'LL BE AN IMMENSE ELECTROMAGNETIC PULSE DISCHAR--!

ZZZIIITT!

ZZZAAATT!

ZZZIIITT!

...RRRT... RRRT...

SSSSSSSSS

...RRRT... RRRT...

SSSSSS

...err...

BENEDICT IS A ROBOT--

--A ROBOT!
C'MON, HARRY!
LET'S HOPE WE'RE NOT TOO LATE TO DO SOME GOOD!
SO WHO SAID I WANTED TO PLAY HERO?
WHO SAID YOU HAD A CHOICE?
WE SEEM TO HAVE A LOT OF INJURED HERE!
OOW!
YOU ALLRIGHT, JULIE-SU?
OTHER THAN A FEW BUMPS, SIR--
--I'M FINE!
I SEE YOU AND THE TROOPS ARE NO WORSE FOR WEAR, GENERAL!
NO THANKS TO THOSE MONSTERS!
THEY'RE IN SHOCK! THE LEGIONNAIRES APPARENTLY ARE DEPENDENT UPON THEIR ENHANCEMENTS FOR SURVIVAL!
EVERYTHING ELECTRONIC IN HERE IS DOWN AND OUT, CONSTABLE!
HARRY, GO FIND A WORKING PHONE AND GET THE MEDICS IN HERE!
WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING?

TO SEE IF I CAN FIND THE *CAUSE* OF THIS MESS--

--AS WELL AS CHECKING FOR ANYONE ELSE NEEDING *HELP*!

Eh? EVERYWHERE INSIDE IS OUT OF POWER--

--EXCEPT *HERE*?!

WHY?

--AND IN TONIGHT'S NEWS--

--VOTERS ARE TURNING OUT IN RECORD NUMBERS, MAKING THE RESULTS TOO CLOSE TO CALL--

IT'S AS IF THIS AREA WAS THE EYE OF THE HURRICANE--

--OR *GROUND ZERO* MOST LIKELY!

OH MY--! *THE GUARDIAN*!

WHOA!

EASY! MY HEAD IS--

--STILL RINGING!

THANK GOODNESS YOU'RE STILL *ALIVE*!

NO THANKS TO *DIMITRI*!

SPEAKING OF WHICH--

--*WHERE* IS HE?

GOOD QUESTION! AND PROBABLY ONE WE WON'T HAVE AN ANSWER TO FOR SOME TIME!

TO SAY THE LEAST, CONSTABLE!

BUT WHEN THE TIME IS *RIGHT*--

--LET EVERYONE BEWARE!

AND AS I SAT IN MY PRIVATE SHUTTLE SPEEDING THROUGH THE SUBWAY TUBES, I WAS ALREADY TALLYING UP THE WIN-LOSS COLUMNS, GAUGING WHAT THE TRUE VICTORIES AND DEFEATS WERE.

AS USUAL IN WAR, MANY LEGIONNAIRES FELL IN THE LINE OF DUTY, INCLUDING THOSE WHO ATTEMPTED TO WREST CONTROL OF HAVEN FROM THE GUARDIANS. WE SHALL MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO LIBERATE THOSE WHO SURVIVED.

THE FIRST MAJOR VICTORY, HOWEVER, WAS THE ELECTION OF BENEDICT TO THE POSITION OF HIGH COUNCILOR. UNFORTUNATELY, HIS CIRCUITS COULDN'T WITHSTAND THE ELECTROMAGNETIC PULSE DISCHARGE.

ENN

JUST AS FORTUNATELY, WE HAVE A *BACK-UP CANDIDATE* TO SERVE IN HIS STEAD.

ON A MORE PERSONAL NOTE, THE POWER SURGE TOOK OUT THE DEVICE TIED-IN TO PRAVDA'S NEURAL IMPLANTS, LEAVING THE FORMER HIGH COUNCILOR TO SPEND OUT THE REST OF HIS DAYS AS A VEGETABLE.

I'D STILL PREFER IT WAS HIS ANCESTOR THIS HAPPENED TO.

AS FOR KNUCKLES--

--ALTHOUGH IT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE NOTHING MORE THAN A SIMPLE EXAMINATION, IT APPEARS I TRIGGERED OFF SOMETHING FAR MORE DEVASTATING THAN I ANTICIPATED--

--AND IN THE PROCESS, DISCOVERED A REALM OF POSSIBILITIES TO PURSUE IN THE FUTURE. *DEFINITELY A MAJOR VICTORY!*

NEXT ISSUE: JOIN KEN, MANNY & ANDREW AS THEY PRESENT TO YOU, AT LONG LAST, THE SECRET HISTORY OF KNUCKLES AS HE AND LOCKE ARE FINALLY REUNITED IN THIS YEAR'S MOST OFFBEAT TALE ...

CHILDHOOD'S END!

FISTFUL OF LETTERS

HI, IT'S J.F. ... I DECIDED WE'RE GOING TO DO A BIG SONIC/KNUCKLES MINI-SERIES FEATURING MAMMOTH MOGUL...
OH, I AGREE WITH YOU... I THINK MAMMOTH MOGUL IS A GREAT VILLAIN WITH ALL KINDS OF POTENTIAL...
BESIDES, HE WORKS FOR PEANUTS!
I HEARD THAT!

OFF PANEL **by Gallagher & Manak**

THIS JUST IN!

What's up, Hog & Knux fans? As you know, we get a lot of mail (and I do mean A LOT!!!) in the Sonic and Knuckles office every day. I'm not just talking about snail mail either, we receive hundreds of e-mails as well. Most talk about their interest in the book and what's going on in recent issues. Others ask so many questions it can make your head spin right off like a top. And still many others discuss their collection and how to complete it by searching for the missing issues. The ones I want to discuss in this editorial are the ones for many of our freelance talent. There are many fans who want to write directly to them, specifically to the writers and artists who make our favorite characters come to life. Well, if you are one of those fans, here's how to do it. If you forward it to us we will gladly send it to whomever you want to write to. Just simply send your letters to:

Sonic & Knuckles Talent
Attn: (Name of person)
c/o Archie Comic Publications, Inc.
P.O. Box #419
Mamaroneck, NY 10543-0419

P.S.: Ken Penders does have a website of his own you could write to at: www.kenpenders.com

Catch you on the flip side!

J.F. GABRIE
Editor

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Note: Due to the overwhelming amount of e-mail and snail mail, it is impossible for us to reply personally to each and every message. However, your opinions are important to us and each message will be read. Also, due to space limitations, some correspondence may be edited. Thanks for understanding!

Re: KNUCKLES THE ECHIDNA #19-#21 (The Forbidden Zone)-

Dear editor,

The Forbidden Zone trilogy has amazed me with its incredible artwork and unbelievable scripts! The writing was excellent, as always. Ken Penders never ceases to amaze me. I can't wait to see what happens when Elias returns home. He really is sort of handsome, isn't he? Also, here's hoping that Tobor finds his rightful place in Haven. I've been wondering... is that Shinginta thing on the wall a sound effect or something that Moritori scrawled on there? This book will always be an unending source of entertainment for me and you can always count on me to read every one that comes out. I've enclosed my mailing address and e-mail address in case any fans want to talk. Keep up the way past cool work!

Reanna King (age 15)
3024 Conch Avenue
Eau Claire, WI 54701
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Thanks, Reanna. We really appreciate your praise for The Forbidden Zone story. I hope we can keep creating stories to satisfy you and our other readers the way this one did. The Shinginta thing was not a sound effect. It was something Moritori Rex (the fake Tobor) wrote on the wall before escaping out of Haven.

Dear Knuckles,

I like you and Sonic. I thought you were a bad guy because I played the game SONIC 1. You knocked Sonic out when he was Super Sonic and stole the Chaos Emeralds from him. Now, for the questions: 1) How do you fly? I don't see wings on you. 2) Are you a real species of animal? I never heard of echidnas. 3) What's that white mark on you? Well, see ya!

George Jian
Bronx, NY

You must remember that Knuckles was tricked by Robotnik to think that Sonic was the bad guy. That's why they fought. Since then, they've learned to become good friends. Now to answer your questions: 1) Knuckles doesn't need wings to fly, that power comes from his ability to connect with the Chaos Emerald. He just recently learned of this connection and is still learning how to use and harness those powers. 2) Echidnas are for real (check out your dictionary or encyclopedia, if you don't believe me). They are actually spiny anteaters from Australia and New Zealand. 3) That mark is hereditary. It's been passed down from male guardian to male guardian.

Dear Knuckles Staff,

First of all, I'd like to say you all do a great job! I always enjoy reading Knuckles comics. In Knux #21, it says, "You're here regarding the craft that carried Elias here over some fifteen years ago, aren't you?" but in past issues, you've said Sally is fifteen, and the Robotnik's coup happened when she was five (and I know Sonic must be a couple of months older because he just turned sixteen) so how can Elias be fifteen years old if he was a baby when the coup happened?

Thanx,
SonicGyrl@aol.com

Elias was about five when the craft disappeared which was during the Great War. Sally, at that time, was still an infant. Five years later, the Great War finally ended and Robotnik's coup happened not too soon after that. That would make Elias about twenty years old. Hope this clears the confusion.

To Fistful of Letters,

When I read KNUCKLES THE ECHIDNA #20, I was so happy to find out that Prince Elias is rightful heir to the throne of the Kingdom of Acorn! If Sally's not the heiress anymore, then she will not have to undergo the rite and she won't have to leave Sonic! Hooray!!!

E.Miller
EMiller152@aol.com

No doubt the return of Elias will change everything back in Sonic's book. But Sally isn't the only one having to deal with family secrets, our own favorite echidna is dealing with guardian secrets galore and will come to head next issue. Check out the coming attractions for more on that.

Well, that's it for this month. Thank you all for your comments. See you in thirty. And remember...

KEEP COOL!

Cover by Patrick Spaziante and Ken Penders. Colors and separations by Laughton Huggins and Heroic Age.

COMING ATTRACTIONS

In two weeks: *We've billed it as the strangest issue of Sonic you will ever read! Why? It could be because it's a completely backwards issue (and boy, do we mean it)! It has a lot to do with Knothole Village being in danger because it's three hours ahead. Just wait 'til you see what happens when Sonic tries to save it. Story by Karl Bollers with art by Steven Butler and Pam Eklund. Also: Tails and Amy visit the library. By Ken Penders, Art Mawhinney and Jim Amash!*

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG #71 on sale late March 1999!

Next Month: *The cover says it all -- Knuckles comes face to face with his father. This is the father/son reunion we've wanted to see since issue #1... and now it's finally here. There will be some surprises (especially when Knux's origin is finally revealed!) so don't miss it! "Childhood's End" is written by Ken Penders with art by Manny Galan and Andrew Pepoy! Cover by Patrick Spaziante, Ken Penders and Heroic Age with a silver-inked cover for this silver anniversary issue.*

KNUCKLES THE ECHIDNA #25 on sale early April 1999!

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